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SUBJECT: SAG INTELLIGENCE MINISTER LED OFFICIAL DELEGATION
TO PALESTINE

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: SAG INTELLIGENCE MINISTER RONNIE KASRILS LED AN OFFICIAL SAG DELEGATION TO PALESTINE IN EARLY MAY AND MET PRESIDENT MAHMOUD ABBAS AND PRIME MINISTER ISMAIL HANIYAH, AMONG OTHERS. KASRILS MADE COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE SITUATION IN PALESTINE AND THE APARTHEID ERA, CHARACTERIZING THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION AS "MODERN DAY APARTHEID." KASRILS INVITED PRIME MINISTER ISMAIL HANIYAH TO A RECIPROCAL VISIT. PRO-ISRAELI JEWISH GROUPS IN SOUTH AFRICA DENOUNCED THE INVITATION. IN CONTRAST, LOCAL ISLAMIC GROUPS SUPPORTED THE SAG'S EFFORTS AND ENDORSED HANIYAH'S VISIT AS "ONE OF THE MOST CONSTRUCTIVE FOREIGN POLICY ENGAGEMENTS" OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. THE ORGANIZERS OF UPCOMING PRO-PALESTINIAN EVENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA HAVE CALLED ON THE UNITED NATIONS TO PROVIDE INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION FOR THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE; AND SOME ADVOCATE FOR ECONOMIC BOYCOTTS AND SANCTIONS AGAINST ISRAEL. THE SAG, AT UN REQUEST, RECENTLY HOSTED THE UN CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE WHICH WAS ATTENDED BY PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI POLITICIANS, ACADEMICS AND DELEGATES FROM GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY. PAST INVITATIONS TO LEADERS OF HAMAS AND THE PLO IN RECENT YEARS HAVE FAILED TO OCCUR DUE TO "SCHEDULING CONFLICTS." END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) FROM 01-06 MAY, SAG INTELLIGENCE MINISTER RONNIE KASRILS LED AN OFFICIAL SAG DELEGATION TO THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES INCLUDING THE GAZA STRIP AND THE WEST BANK. KASRILS DELEGATION INCLUDED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SAG AND RULING AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (ANC) PARTY; INTER ALIA, DUMISANI SITHOLE, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT (MP) AND CHAIR OF THE PARLIAMENTARY PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS; DR. TED PEKANE, SOUTH AFRICAN REPRESENTATIVE TO THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITY; M. NTENTENI OF THE ANC WOMEN'S LEAGUE; AMONG OTHERS. KASRILS SPOKE DURING SOUTH AFRICA'S FREEDOM (NATIONAL) DAY CELEBRATIONS IN GAZA AND RAMALLAH. THE SAG DELEGATION MET PRESIDENT MAHMOUD ABBAS, PRIME MINISTER ISMAIL HANIYAH, PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITY (PNA) MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS, PALESTINIAN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (PLC) MEMBERS, NGO'S, POLITICAL PARTY REPRESENTATIVES AND THINK TANKS. KASRILS DELIVERED A SPEECH AT THE BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY ON THE LESSONS OF SOUTH AFRICA'S ANTI-APARTHEID STRUGGLE AND MADE COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE SITUATION IN PALESTINE AND THE APARTHEID ERA, CHARACTERIZING THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION POLICY AS A FORM OF "MODERN DAY APARTHEID." (NOTE: EMBOFFS HAVE HEARD THIS CHARACTERIZATION BEING MADE BY OTHER ANC COALITION MEMBERS. END NOTE) HE VISITED THE ISRAELI SECURITY WALL NEAR BETHLEHEM WITH DR. MUSTAFA BARGHOUTHI, MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION, AND LAID A WREATH ON BEHALF OF THE SAG AND THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA AT THE RAMALLAH TOMB OF THE LATE

PRESIDENT YASSER ARAFAT. ABBAS RECEIVED KASRILS IN RAMALLAH AND BRIEFED HIM ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORY AND EFFORTS TO REVIVE THE PEACE PROCESS. PNA DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE, GENERAL TOUFIQ TIRAWI, SAID ABBAS AND KASRILS DISCUSSED ISSUES OF MUTUAL COOPERATION, ADDING THAT KASRILS EXPRESSED THE SAG'S SUPPORT FOR THE PNA. KASRILS ALSO REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED THE SAG'S SUPPORT FOR "THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, PRESIDENT ABBAS AND THE NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT."

13. (SBU) KASRILS' VISIT SPARKED AN INTENSE LOCAL CONTROVERSY AFTER A PNA PRESS REPORT INDICATED THAT KASRILS FORMALLY INVITED THE PALESTINIAN PRIME MINISTER, ISMAIL HANIYAH, TO A RECIPROCAL OFFICIAL PRETORIA VISIT. THE SAG APPEARED TO DISAVOW THIS INVITATION WHEN DFA SPOKESMAN, RONNI MAMOEPA, NOTED THAT ONLY THE PRESIDENT OR FOREIGN MINISTER COULD INVITE HANIYAH. PRO-ISRAELI JEWISH GROUPS IN SOUTH AFRICA SUCH AS THE SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES (SAJBD) AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN ZIONIST FEDERATION (SAZF) DENOUNCED THIS INVITATION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR "NOT IN MY NAME" CAMPAIGN. THEY ARGUED THE SAG SHOULD NOT ALLOW AN OFFICIAL VISIT BY A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION THAT DID NOT RECOGNIZE THE STATE OF ISRAEL OR ITS RIGHT TO EXIST. IN CONTRAST, LOCAL ISLAMIC GROUPS ECHOED A LOCAL POLITICAL MANTRA THAT "SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL HISTORY TEACHES THAT DIFFERENCE AND DISCORD CAN BE OVERCOME THROUGH INTENSE NEGOTIATIONS." SOUTH AFRICA'S JAMIATUL ULAMA SUPPORTED THE SAG'S EFFORTS TO PLAY A "CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE" IN PALESTINE AND ENDORSED THE VISIT INVITATION AS "ONE OF THE MOST CONSTRUCTIVE FOREIGN POLICY ENGAGEMENTS THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HAS EMBARKED ON IN RECENT YEARS." THEY FURTHER CLAIMED THAT BY "DENYING THE PALESTINIAN PRIME MINISTER THE RIGHT TO TRAVEL ON THE BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE, THE SAJBD AND THE SAZF ARE EFFECTIVELY PROVING THEMSELVES TO BE UNDERMINING THE SA

GOVERNMENT'S CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN PALESTINE."

14. (SBU) THIS CONTROVERSY WAS FURTHER STOKED BY THE 15 MAY VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA BY MOHAMMED NAZZAL, A MEMBER OF THE HAMAS POLITBURO. NAZZAL VISITED ROBBEN ISLAND AS A GUEST OF THE LOCAL GROUP, FRIENDS OF AL-AQSA. NAZZAL WAS IN SOUTH AFRICA TO ATTEND A CONFERENCE COORDINATED BY THE FRIENDS OF AL-AQSA COMMEMORATING THE 1948 OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE. WHEN NAZZAL TOURED THE PRISON CELL FORMERLY OCCUPIED BY NELSON MANDELA, HE SAID THAT "(MANDELA'S) SUFFERING WAS AN INSPIRATION TO THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE" AND DESCRIBED THE LIBERATION MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA AS "A WORKABLE MODEL" FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES. KASRILS MET WITH NAZZAL IN CAPE TOWN WHERE, ACCORDING TO ISMAIL COLLIER, THE COORDINATOR OF THE FRIENDS OF AL-AQSA, HE EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE AND CALLED FOR ENDING THE OCCUPATION OF PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES. KASRILS ALSO REPORTEDLY QUESTIONED THE PATRIOTISM AND LOYALTY OF SOUTH AFRICAN GROUPS THAT DENOUNCED THE SAG'S RECOGNITION OF THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. HE REPEATED PRESIDENT THABO MBEKI'S POSITION THAT THE "POLITICAL BOYCOTT AGAINST HAMAS NEEDS TO BE BROKEN" AND THAT AN OFFICIAL INVITATION TO VISIT SOUTH AFRICA WOULD BE EXTEND TO PM HANIYAH.

15. (SBU) ANOTHER UPCOMING EVENT IS LIKELY TO ADD TO THIS CONTROVERSY. SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIC GROUPS ANNOUNCED A SERIES OF PROTESTS IN SUPPORT OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE FOR 4-9 JUNE. THIS PROPOSED WEEK OF PROTEST ACTION COINCIDES WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES AROUND THE WORLD COMMEMORATING THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OCCUPATION BY ISRAEL OF THE WEST BANK, GAZA, EAST JERUSALEM AND THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA WILL BE COORDINATED BY THE END THE OCCUPATION CAMPAIGN, MADE UP OF AROUND 20 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, SOLIDARITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND POLITICAL PARTIES. THE COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS (COSATU) PRESIDENT WILLIE MADISHA SAID PROTEST ACTION AGAINST ISRAEL "MUST BE SUSTAINED FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE" BEYOND THE WEEK OF JUNE 4. HISTORICALLY, COSATU HAS SUPPORTED A CAMPAIGN OF BOYCOTTS, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS AGAINST ISRAEL "IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE WORKERS AND PEOPLE OF PALESTINE." (NOTE: COSATU IS A MAJOR COMPONENT OF THE ANC RULING COALITION ALONG

WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF SOUTH AFRICA. END NOTE) THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (SACC) GENERAL SECRETARY EDDIE MAKUE SAID HIS ORGANIZATION, TOGETHER WITH THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND THE CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF SWEDEN SUPPORTS THE 04 JUNE PROTESTS AND COMPARED THE OCCUPATION OF PALESTINIAN TERRITORY WITH THE SYSTEM OF APARTHEID.

16. (SBU) THE ORGANIZERS OF THESE PRO-PALESTINIAN EVENTS HAVE CALLED ON THE UNITED NATIONS AND ITS MEMBER STATES TO PROVIDE INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION FOR THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE LIVING UNDER OCCUPATION. IN THE WEEK OF 4 JUNE, LUNCH-TIME PICKETS IN VARIOUS CENTERS AROUND THE COUNTRY WILL BE LAUNCHED, INCLUDING A DEMONSTRATION BY MPS AND A CANDLE-LIGHT VIGIL OUTSIDE THE US CONSULATE IN JOHANNESBURG. LEADERS OF THE ANC HAVE ALSO CALLED FOR A PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE OCCUPATION OF PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, AND MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP HAVE CALLED FOR SOUTH AFRICANS TO BOYCOTT PRODUCTS FROM ISRAEL. THE ANC, HOWEVER, WILL NOT JOIN THE BOYCOTT OF ISRAELI PRODUCTS. PA MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, DR. NASSEREDDIN AL-SHAER (WHO WAS RECENTLY DETAINED BY THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT) IS AMONG A DELEGATION OF THREE PALESTINIAN LEGISLATORS INVITED TO SOUTH AFRICA TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROTESTS. SAG MINISTER OF EDUCATION, NALEDI PANDOR, HAS INVITED AL-SHAER TO A MEETING. PALESTINIAN AMBASSADOR ALI HALIMEH SAID IT WAS UNCERTAIN WHETHER THE DETAINED MINISTER WOULD BE ABLE TO VISIT SOUTH AFRICA.

17. (SBU) IN ADDITION TO THESE PAST AND PLANNED EVENTS, THE SAG, AT THE REQUEST OF THE UN, RECENTLY HOSTED THE UN CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE. THAT EVENT WAS ATTENDED BY BOTH PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI POLITICIANS (NOTE: ISRAELI POLITICAL PARTICIPATION WAS MINIMAL. END NOTE), ACADEMICS AND DELEGATES FROM GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY. ACCORDING TO FORMIN DLAMINI ZUMA, THE CONFERENCE CALLED FOR THE "ENDING OF SANCTIONS AGAINST THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY AND THE RESUMPTION OF DIALOG BETWEEN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL. IN HER 28 MAY BUDGET ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT IN CAPE TOWN, DLAMINI ZUMA NOTED THAT RECENTLY, "VIOLENCE HAS AGAIN ERUPTED BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS. WE CALL ON BOTH PARTIES TO CEASE HOSTILITIES AND ALLOW FOR THE RESUMPTION OF

THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS."

18. (SBU) COMMENT: KASRILS HAS LONG BEEN IDENTIFIED WITH PRO-PALESTINIAN AND ANTI-ISRAELI SENTIMENTS THAT ARE COMMONLY HELD WITHIN THE ANC. THERE HAS BEEN A CLOSE, DECADES-LONG ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE PLO AND THE ANC AS BOTH REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IDENTIFIED WITH THE EACH OTHER AND FOUND A SENSE OF IDENTITY AND COMMON CAUSE. YASSER ARAFATS PHOTOGRAPH ADORNS THE WALLS OF THE ROBBEN ISLAND VISITORS CENTER, ALONG WITH THAT OF NELSON MANDELA AND BILL CLINTON. KASRILS, OF JEWISH HERITAGE HIMSELF, IS A LIGHTNING ROD FOR PRO-ISRAEL GROUPS HERE, WHO HAVE DESCRIBED HIM AS "A SELF-HATING JEW." THE REPORTED INTENTION OF THE SAG TO HOST AN OFFICIAL PALESTINIAN VISIT IS SUPPORTED BY MANY ANC MEMBERS AND SAG/DFA OFFICIALS, BUT NO FIRM DATE FOR A RECIPROCAL PALESTINIAN VISIT HAS BEEN DETERMINED. NEVERTHELESS, THE STORY ABOUT HANIYAH'S POSSIBLE VISIT HAS MOVED TO THE BACK BURNER FOLLOWING THE MOST RECENT UPSURGE OF VIOLENCE BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS, CAUSING THE CONTROVERSY TO FADE IN THE LOCAL PRESS. SIMILAR INVITATIONS IN RECENT YEARS FOR THE SENIOR MOST LEADERS OF HAMAS AND THE PLO TO VISIT SOUTH AFRICA, WHILE SCORING POLITICAL POINTS WITH SOUTH AFRICAN MUSLIM GROUPS, HAVE FAILED TO OCCUR. "SCHEDULING CONFLICTS" ARE USUALLY THE EXPLANATIONS GIVEN FOR THESE HIGH PROFILE NON-EVENTS, BUT POST BELIEVES THESE ARE MERELY FACE-SAVING EXCUSES TO BACK AWAY FROM POTENTIALLY EMBARRASSING VISITS.

TEITELBAUM